NUMB. CCCCLXXXIV.

The SPECTATOR.

Neque cuiquam tam ſtatim clarum ingenium eſt, ut poſſit emergere; niſi illi materia, occaſio, fautor etiam, commendatorque contingat. Plin. Epiſt.

Monday, September 15. 1712.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

OF all the young Fellows who are in their Progreſs thro' any Profeſſion, none ſeem to have ſo good a Title to the Protection of the Men of Eminence in it as the modeſt Man; not ſo much because his Modeſty is a certain Indication of his Merit, as becauſe 'tis a certain Obſtacle to the producing of it. Now, as of all Profeſſions this Virtue is thought to be more particularly unneceſſary in that of the Law than in any other, I ſhall only apply my ſelf to the Relief of ſuch who follow this Profeſſion with this Diſadvantage. What aggravates the Matter is, that thoſe Perſons, who, the better to prepare themſelves for this Study, have made ſome Progreſs in others, have, by addicting themſelves to Letters, encreaſed their natural Modeſty, and conſequently heighten'd the Obſtruction to this Sort of Preferment; ſo that every one of theſe may emphatically be ſaid to be ſuch a one as *laboureth and taketh Pains, and is ſtill the more behind.* It may be a Matter worth diſcuſſing then, Why that which made a Youth ſo amiable to the Ancients, ſhould make him appear ſo ridiculous to the Moderns? and, Why in our Days there ſhould be Neglect, and even Oppreſſion of young Beginners, inſtead of that Protection which was the Pride of theirs? In the Profeſſion ſpoken of, 'tis obvious to every one whoſe Attendance is requir'd at *Weſtminſter-Hall*, with what Difficulty a Youth of any Modeſty has been permitted to make an Obſervation, that could in no wiſe detract from the Merit of his Elders, and is abſolutely neceſſary for the advancing his own. I have often ſeen one of theſe not only moleſted in his Utterance of ſomething very pertinent, but even plunder'd of his Queſtion, and by a ſtrong Serjeant ſhoulder'd out of his Rank, which he has recovered with much Difficulty and Confuſion. Now as great Part of the Buſineſs of this Profeſſion might be diſpatch'd by one that perhaps

——abeſt virtute diſerti
Meſſalæ, nec ſcit quantum Cauſſidius Aulus. Hor.

ſo I can't conceive the Injuſtice done to the Publick, if the Men of Reputation in this Calling would introduce ſuch of the young ones into Buſineſs, whoſe Application to this Study will let them into the Secrets of it, as much as their Modeſty will hinder them from the Practice: I ſay, it would be laying an everlaſting Obligation upon a young Man, to be introduc'd at firſt only as a Mute, till by this Countenance, and a Reſolution to ſupport your good Opinion conceiv'd of him in his Betters, his Complexion ſhall be ſo well ſettled, that the Litigious of this Iſland may be ſecure of his obſtreperous Aid. If I might be indulged to ſpeak in the Stile of a Lawyer, I would ſay, That any one about thirty Years of Age, might make a common Motion to the Court with as much Elegance and Propriety as the moſt aged Advocates in the Hall.

I can't advance the Merit of Modeſty by any Argument of my own ſo powerfully, as by enquiring into the Sentiments the greateſt among the Ancients of different Ages entertain'd upon this Virtue. If we go back to the Days of *Solomon*, we ſhall find Favour a neceſſary Conſequence to a ſhame-fac'd Man. *Pliny*, the greateſt Lawyer and moſt elegant Writer of the Age he liv'd in, in ſeveral of his Epiſtles is very ſollicitous in recommending to the Publick ſome young Men of his own Profeſſion, and very often undertakes to become an Advocate, upon Condition that ſome one of theſe his Favourites might be joyn'd with him, in order to produce the Merit of ſuch, whoſe Modeſty otherwiſe would have ſuppreſs'd it. It may ſeem very marvelous to a ſawcy Modern, that *Multum ſanguinis, multum verecundiæ, multum ſollicitudinis in ore; To have the Face firſt full of Blood, then the Countenance daſh'd with Modeſty, and then the whole Aſpect as of one dying with Fear, when a Man begins to ſpeak*; ſhould be eſteem'd by *Pliny* the neceſſary Qualifications of a fine Speaker. *Shakeſpear* alſo has expreſs'd himſelf in the ſame favourable Strains of Modeſty when he ſays,

——*In*

..... In the Modesty of fearful Duty
I read as much as from the rattling Tongue
Of saucy and audacious Eloquence-----

'Now since these Authors have profess'd themselves for the modest Man, even in the utmost 'Confusions of Speech and Countenance, why 'should an intrepid Utterance and a resolute Vociferation thunder so successfully in our Courts of 'Justice? and why shou'd that Confidence of 'Speech and Behaviour, which seems to acknowledge no Superior, and to defy all Contradiction, 'prevail over that Deference and Resignation 'with which the modest Man implores that favourable Opinion which the other seems to command. 'As the Case at present stands, the best Consolation that I can administer to those who cannot 'get into that Stroke of Business (as the Phrase is) 'which they deserve, is to reckon every particular 'Acquisition of Knowledge in this Study as a real 'Increase of their Fortune; and fully to believe, 'that one Day this imaginary Gain, will certainly 'be made out by one more substantial. I wish you 'would talk to us a little on this Head, you would 'oblige,

SIR,
Your most humble Servant.

The Author of this Letter is certainly a Man of good Sense; but I am perhaps particular in my Opinion on this Occasion; for I have observed, that, under the Notion of Modesty, Men have indulged themselves in a spiritless Sheepishness, and been for ever lost to themselves, their Families, their Friends, and their Country. When a Man has taken Care to pretend to nothing but what he may justly aim at, and can execute as well as any other, without Injustice to any other; it is ever want of Breeding or Courage, to be brow-beaten or elbow'd out of his honest Ambition. I have said often, Modesty must be an Act of the Will, and yet it always implies Self-Denial: For if a Man has an ardent Desire to do what is laudable in him to perform, and, from an unmanly Bashfulness, shrinks away, and lets his Merit languish in Silence, he ought not to be angry at the World that a more unskilful Actor succeeds in his Part, because he has not Confidence to come upon the Stage himself. The Generosity my Correspondent mentions of *Pliny*, cannot be enough applauded. To cherish the Dawn of Merit, and hasten its Maturity, was a Work worthy a Noble *Roman* and a liberal Scholar. That Concern which is described in the Letter, is to all the World the greatest Charm imaginable; but then the modest Man must proceed, and shew a latent Resolution in himself; for the Admiration of his Modesty, arises from the Manifestation of his Merit. I must confess, we live in an Age wherein a few empty Blusterers carry away the Praise of Speaking, while a Crowd of Fellows over-stock'd with Knowledge are run down by them. I say Over-stock'd, because they certainly are so as to their Service of Mankind, if from their very Store they raise to themselves Ideas of Respect, and Greatness of the Occasion, and I know not what, to disable themselves from explaining their Thoughts. I must confess, when I have seen *Charles Frankair* rise up with a commanding Mein, and Torrent of handsome Words, talk a Mile off the Purpose, and drive down twenty bashful Boobies of ten times his Sense, who at the same Time were envying his Impudence and despising his Understanding, it has been Matter of great Mirth to me; but it soon ended in a secret Lamentation, that the Fountains of every thing Praise-worthy in these Realms, the Universities, should be so muddied with a false Sense of this Virtue, as to produce Men capable of being so abused. I will be bold to say, that it is a ridiculous Education which does not qualify a Man to make his best Appearance before the greatest Man and the finest Woman to whom he can address himself. Were this judiciously corrected in the Nurseries of Learning, pert Coxcombs would know their Distance: But we must bear with this false Modesty in our young Nobility and Gentry, till they cease at *Oxford* and *Cambridge* to grow dumb in the Study of Eloquence.

This is to give Notice, That there is a Pack of very good Harriers to be dispos'd of. Enquire of Mr. Fruiterer at the Vine at Fox Hall, at Mrs. Lee's in Bond street Piccadilly, or at the Bull in Windmill street over-against the May-Marker, where you may be further inform'd

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